Whitehorse Liquor Store Survey 2006

Yukon
Liquor Corporation

Whitehorse Store Survey – 2006

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Whitehorse liquor store is the largest in the Yukon, and carries all Yukon Liquor Corporation products. Since renovations are planned for winter 2006/07, and since the last customer survey was done in 1998, this was a good time to seek feedback from our customers on a variety of topics, such as the store exterior and interior, customer service, and product selection.

Although our per capita liquor sales are very high, the recent *Yukon Addictions Survey* confirms that our per capita consumption rates and patterns are consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions. (The difference is caused by the Yukon's high tourist and seasonal worker populations, which are not included in the per capita calculation.)

In the Yukon, as in other Canadian jurisdictions, it's always important to balance the commitment to have a range of liquor products that people want with social responsibility principles, consistent with the *Substance Abuse Action Plan*. Each year, the Yukon Liquor Corporation transfers all of its net income to the Government of Yukon to support government programs, as well as the 12% liquor tax the Corporation collects on behalf of the government. In 05/06, this amounted to $8,000,000.

Prices for liquor products are set based on their cost to the Yukon Liquor Corporation, using fixed markups by product category that have been in place for some time. Our annual report provides information on how the final cost to the consumer is calculated, and attached here as Appendix 2 for information. While prices among jurisdictions vary, YLC prices are generally in the mid-range compared with other Canadian jurisdictions for prices on beer, wine, and spirits, even given our freight costs.

Who participated in the survey?

Participation in the survey was excellent. In-person surveys were done by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics in the Whitehorse store from August 9 to August 15. In addition, the survey was made available on-line. 488 total responses were received, and the graphs attached as Appendix 1 show demographic information about the participants. Many people also gave us additional comments as part of the survey, and all their comments were recorded and fully reviewed.

All questions were also analyzed to determine if there were any significant differences in the responses provided by women and men, by Yukoners and non-residents, by younger people and older people, by people who are frequent customers and those who are not, and by people who spend a small amount per visit and those whose spend more. Interestingly, responses were very similar across all these groups. Where there were significant differences, they are highlighted in the response summary attached.

What did people say?

People told us that they were very happy overall with the customer service provided by the staff. However, they would like to have staff more available to volunteer product information, provide advice, and respond more quickly when there are line-ups at the tills. Of a range of product promotions used by the store, such as on-packs, the one customers were most likely to act on was advice from staff.

Customers told us that the interior of the store needed a freshening-up to look more welcoming and warmer. While they also felt that the exterior of the store needed some work, particularly in the area of parking, a major concern was with their personal security outside the store. Many people felt unsafe themselves, and told us that others of their families and friends chose not to come to the store for this reason.

We also heard that customers continue to want a greater variety of products, in all categories, and that they are particularly concerned with the price of wine. They would also like to place special orders for quantities less than 1 case (the current minimum) and have more information on what is available to order.

Finally, very few people know about our website, although it currently has a full product price list, information on new products, and a variety of social responsibility information useful to consumers.

The results for each survey question are included in this report, along with a summary of the comments received and selected representative comments.

What are we doing with the results?

Customer service will continue to be a priority with Yukon Liquor Corporation staff: we will support the Whitehorse store staff in training and development, as well as working with them to make more of their time available for direct customer service and advice.

Interior renovations will be undertaken in winter 2006/07, and suggestions received will be fully considered in this process. Working with the landlord, parking lot lines were repainted in late summer 2006, and we are continuing to work with them and with other tenants on the overall upkeep of the building exterior. We have also had some initial discussions with the landlord and other tenants regarding security issues, and will continue to work on this concern as a priority with other partners.

We will continue to improve the variety of products available and consider more fully using the special order process to support this. Any changes to the pricing structure would directly result in less money being transferred to the Government of Yukon for programs and services; however, we will continue to compare our product prices with other jurisdictions to ensure that they remain reasonably comparable in all product categories.

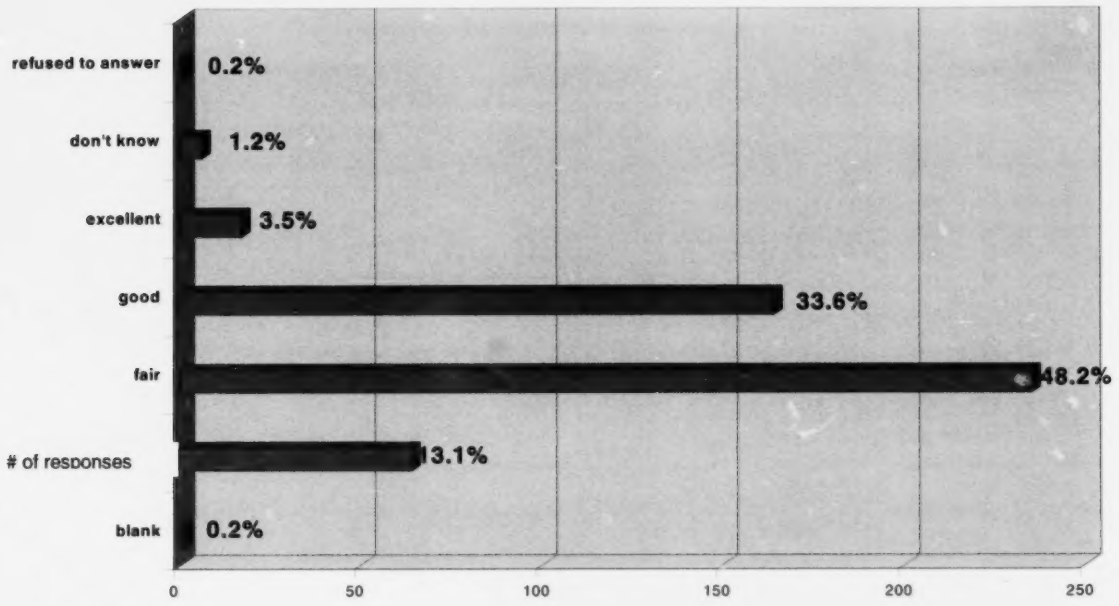
It appears from the survey that most customers prefer to get information on products at the store, rather than on the web. However, we will continue to improve our website and increase its visibility, for the benefit of customers who choose to use this information and for liquor licensees.

Keep it simple - use my taxpayer dollars wisely.

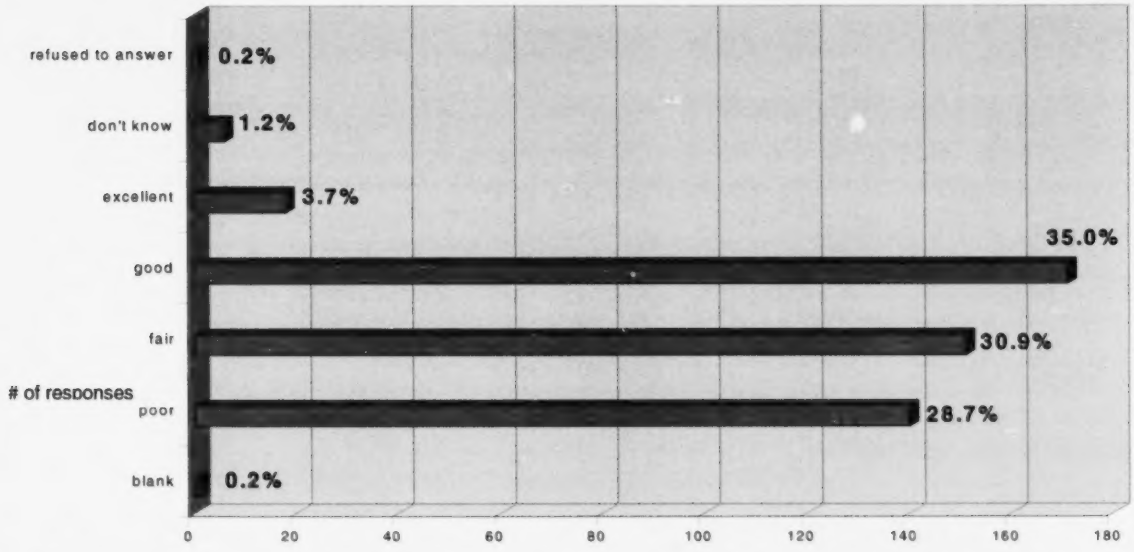
I like the idea of being asked for input. Publish the results and stick to the plan.

Responses: Store Exterior

Overall, how would you rate the outside of the store?



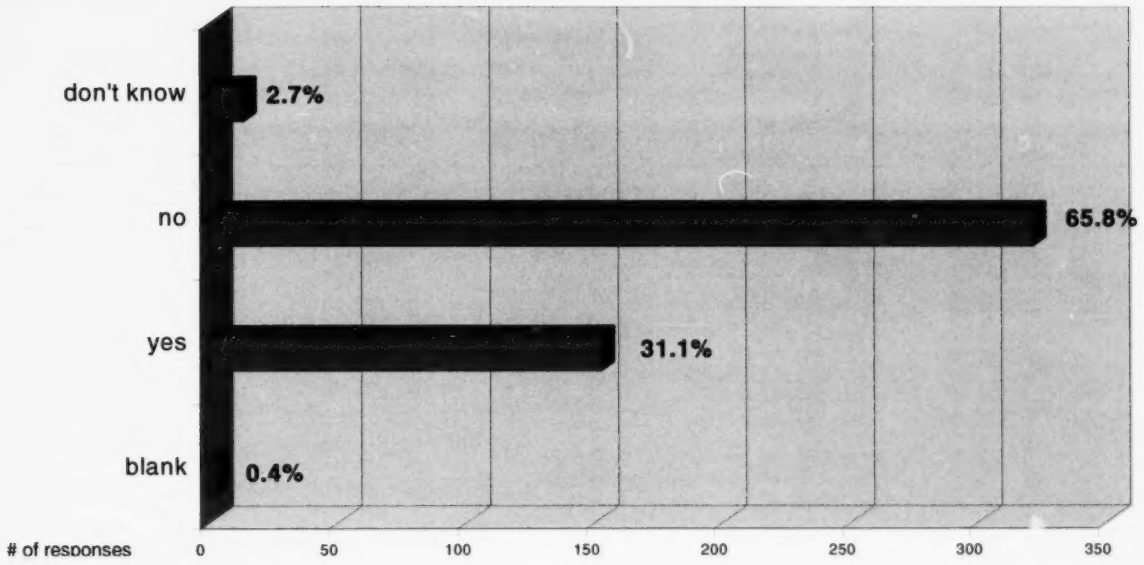
Overall, how would you rate the parking?



Many people expressed dissatisfaction with the exterior of the store, recommending that it should be more attractive. People suggested repairs, repainting, and regular cleaning of the exterior, along with decorative touches like flowers. Generally people felt that the exterior should be "spruced up".

We also received many comments received about the parking: lack of painted lines at the time, the often "hectic" and "congested" nature of the lot, and the need for clear parking signage and better traffic flow.

Do you have any concerns or suggestions about security?



More than 30% of survey participants expressed concerns with security outside the building. This issue was also highlighted by many people in response to the question, "If there were one thing that would make a big difference to you so that you would enjoy shopping here more, what would it be?" Although responses to this question did not vary significant between men and women, many of the comments referred to women in particular feeling unsafe outside the store.

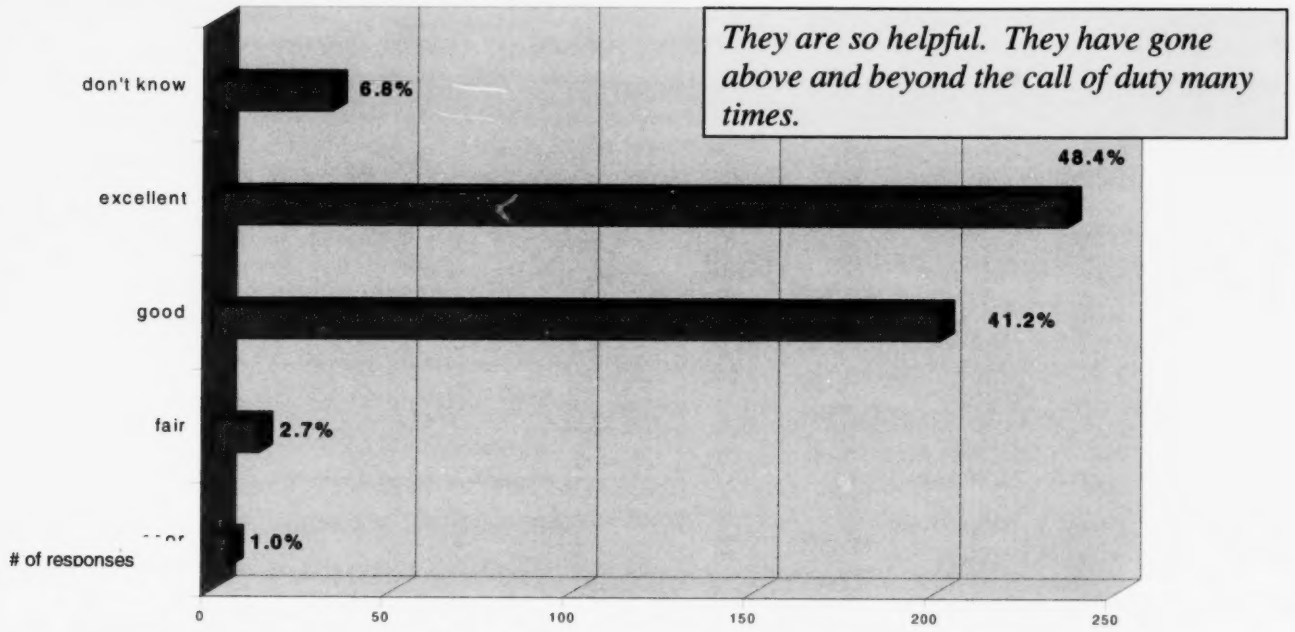
The majority expressed concerns over people panhandling and loitering in the parking lot and at the store entrance. Suggestions offered included using security staff, especially during busy times; exterior security cameras; and "a compassionate approach to handling people outside the store".

My wife is bothered to the point where she no longer comes to the store.

Sometimes I prefer to go elsewhere and pay more money. I just hate getting hassled for money and cigarettes.

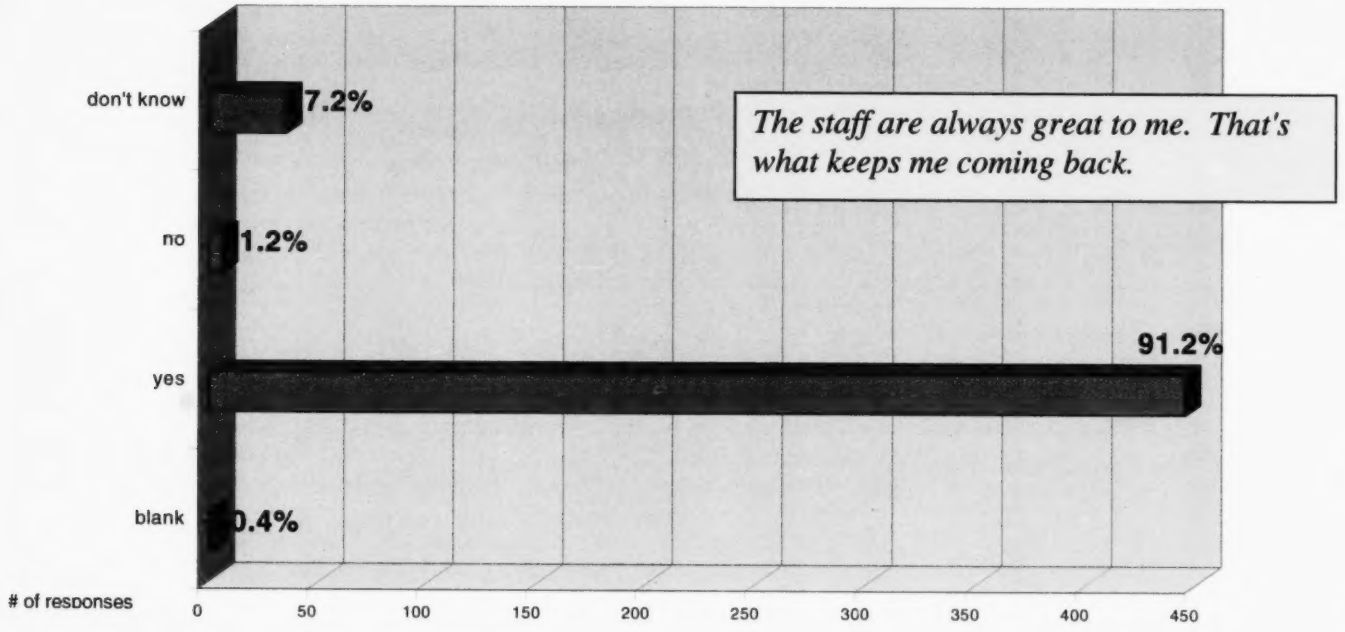
Responses: Customer Service

Is the customer service you received at this store excellent, good, or fair?



They are so helpful. They have gone above and beyond the call of duty many times.

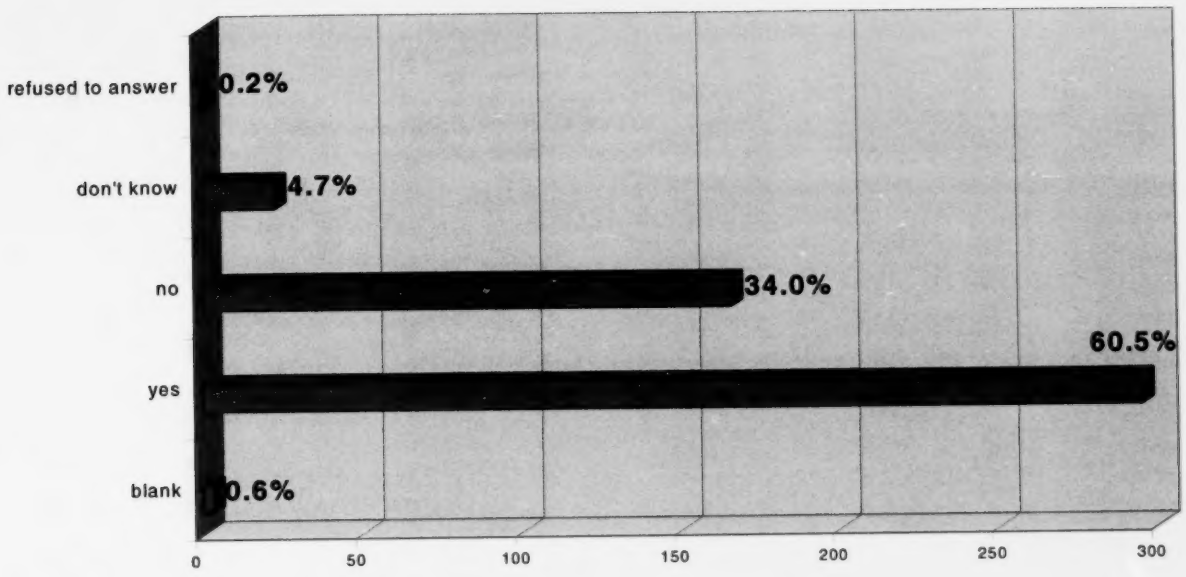
Were the staff friendly and courteous?



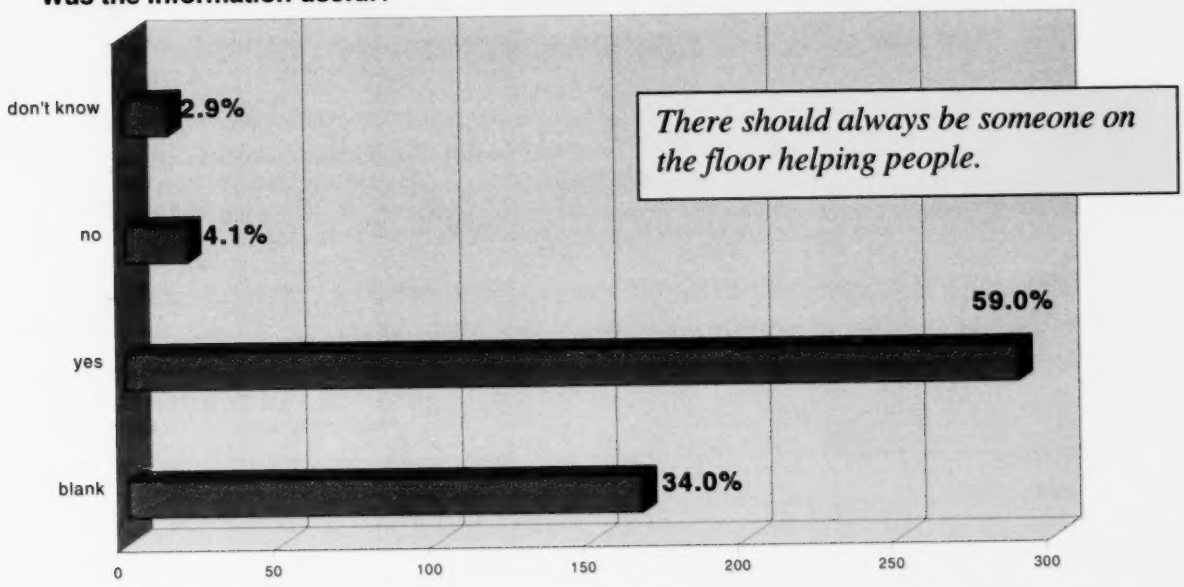
The staff are always great to me. That's what keeps me coming back.

Overall, people were very happy with the customer service they receive from the Whitehorse store staff. More than 90% rated the service as "good" or "excellent", and the same proportion felt that the staff were friendly and courteous. Comments received generally reflected this satisfaction; however, there were a number who felt that staff could be more outgoing with customers.

Did the staff offer to help you?



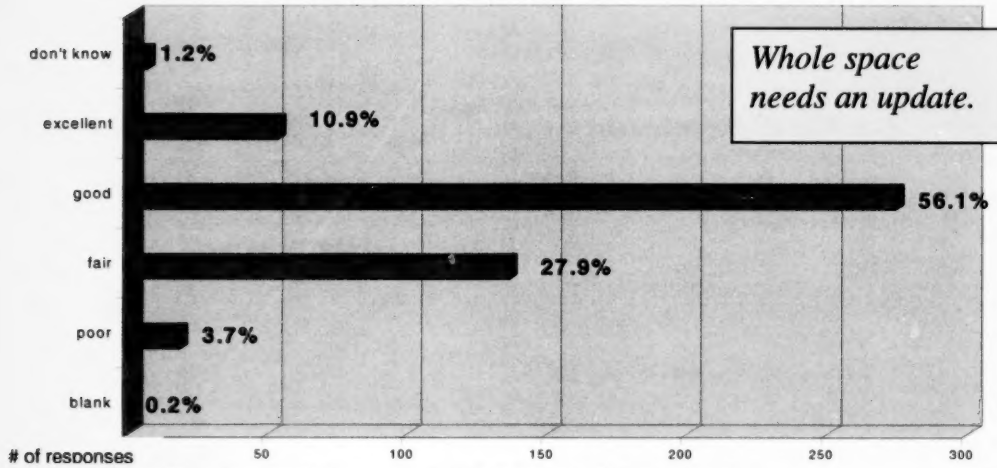
Was the information useful?



Customers were offered assistance from staff 60% of the time. Of those who received assistance from staff, 60% found the information useful. Most people (approximately 60%) did want to be offered help from staff, and noted that they would like to have more staff "on the floor", with product knowledge of beer, wine, and spirits, and who could make recommendations, provide drink recipes, and offer pairing suggestions for wine and beer. Customers also asked that more tills be open to reduce line-ups, particularly during busy periods.

Responses: Store Interior & Layout

Overall, how would you rate the inside of the store?

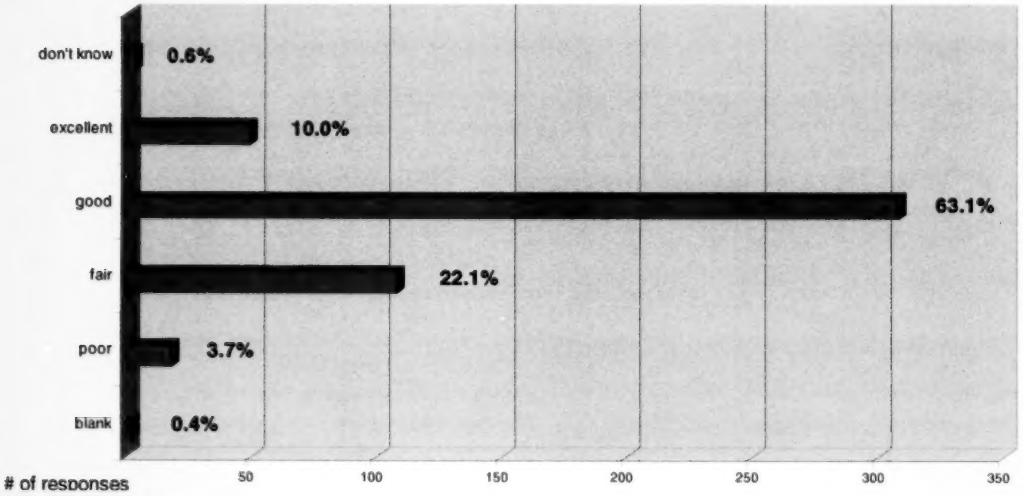


Whole space needs an update.

72% of customers feel the store interior is only "good" or "fair", with roughly the same rating for the layout. However, 84% could easily find what they were looking for. And almost 70% of customer prefer the current grouping of wines by country.

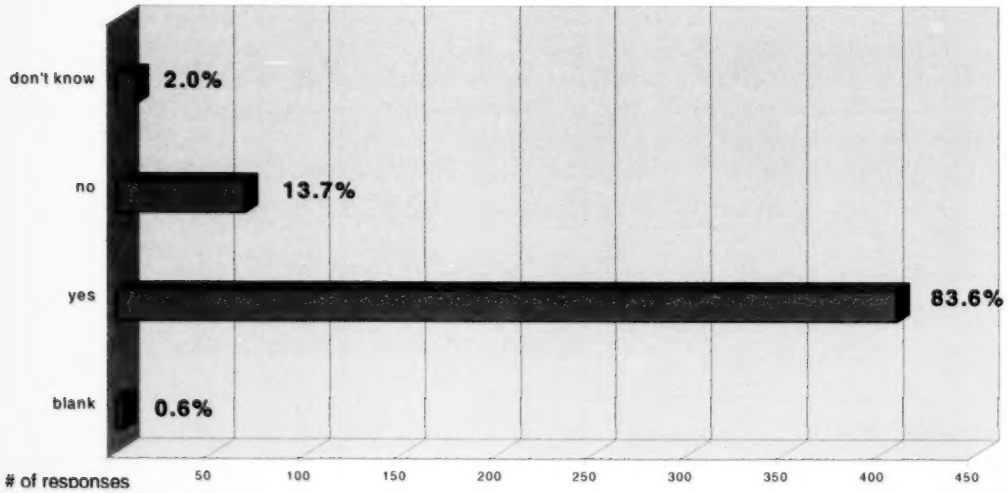
Many people suggested better signage. The great majority of comments related to the interior needing renovations, particularly in making the space more welcoming, with brighter colours and better lighting, and generally updating the "look" of the store.

Overall, how would you rate the layout of the store?



Make it less industrial-looking...needs a paint job...(and) nice displays so it doesn't look like a warehouse.

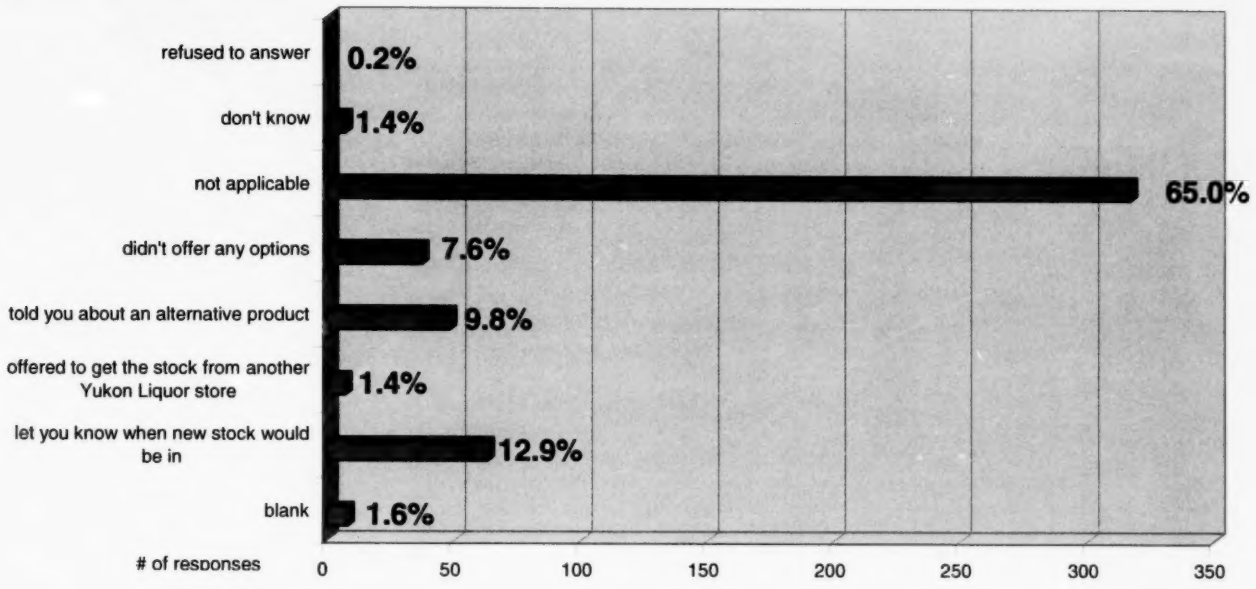
Can you easily find the products you are looking for?



Need more fridges or walk-in coolers for cold products

Make it bright and cheery...modernize it...brighter, lighter colours.

If the product you wanted was out of stock, what options did the staff offer you?



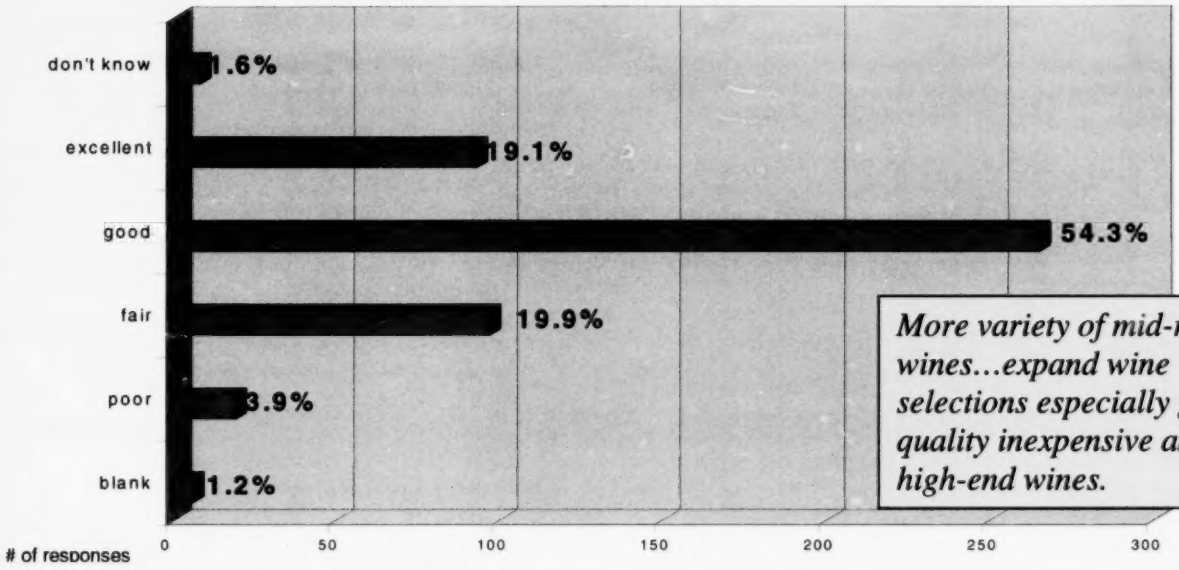
If the product customers wanted was not available, other options were not regularly offered by store staff, including alternative products, obtaining the product from other Yukon liquor store, advising the customer when new stock would arrive, or explaining the special order process.

People who know about how to make special orders find the option generally unworkable, because of the current minimum one-case order requirement.

The special order process is unreasonable and prohibitive.

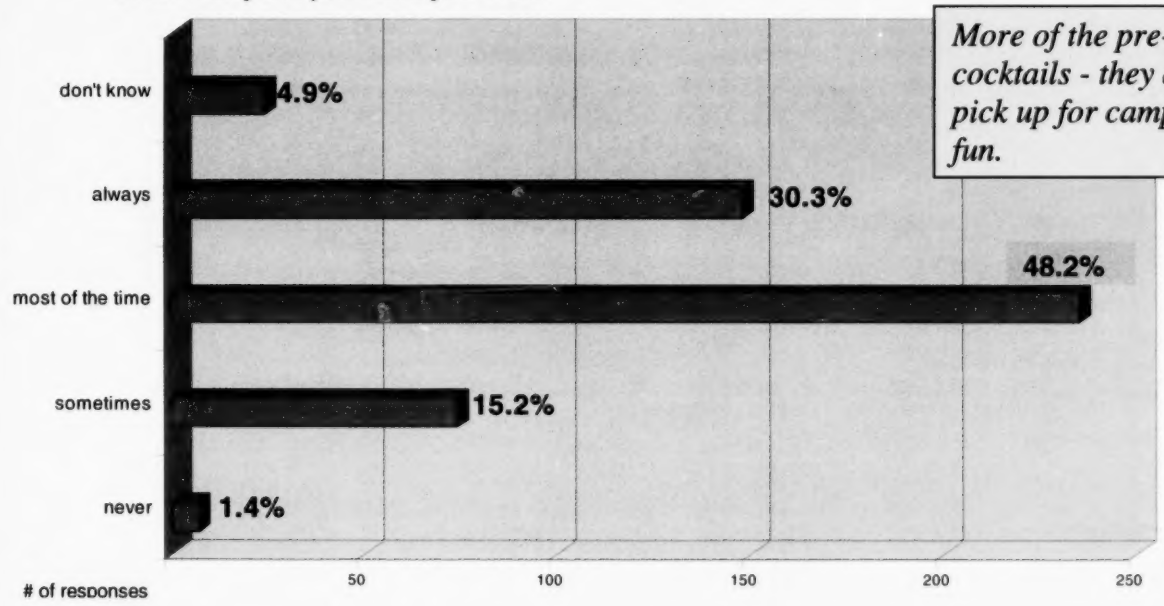
Results: Products

Overall, what is your opinion of the range of products we have?



More variety of mid-range wines...expand wine selections especially good quality inexpensive and high-end wines.

Do we carry the products you want?



More of the pre-mixed cocktails - they are great to pick up for camping or for fun.

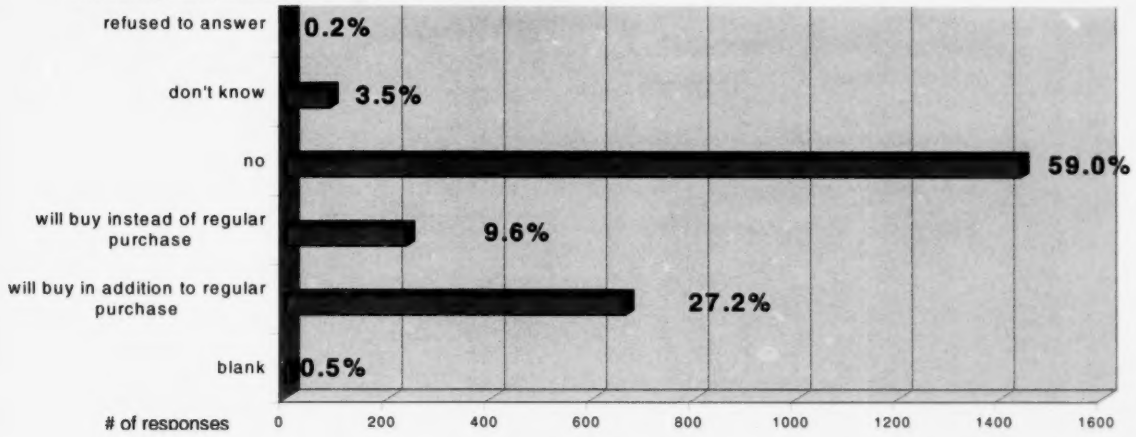
Although 73% of customers felt that the range of products was excellent or good, 24% felt it was fair or poor. Similarly, 78% found what they wanted all or most of the time.

Many people provided specific product suggestions, while others asked for a greater range within a specific product category. Most interest was expressed in a greater variety of wines, particularly organic wines, Canadian wines, and beers (both Canadian microbrewery and international beers). Customers also suggested a limited range of non-liquor products, such as ice, mixers, and gift bags.

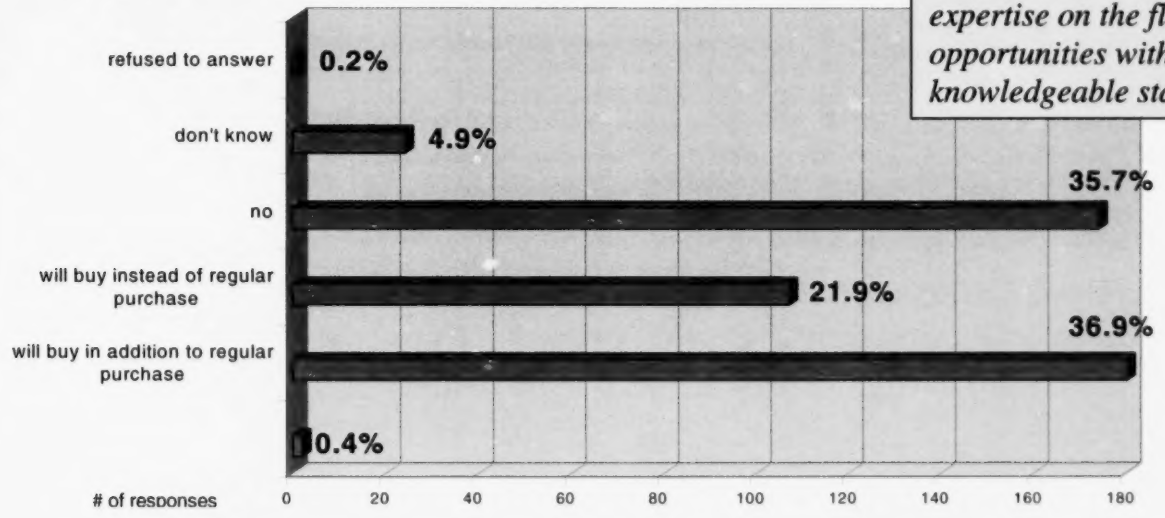
Results: Purchase Decisions

More than 50% of liquor store customers don't always know in advance what they'll buy.

How do on-packs, in-store tastings, store displays, feature products, and product information influence what you buy?



How does advice from store staff influence what you buy?



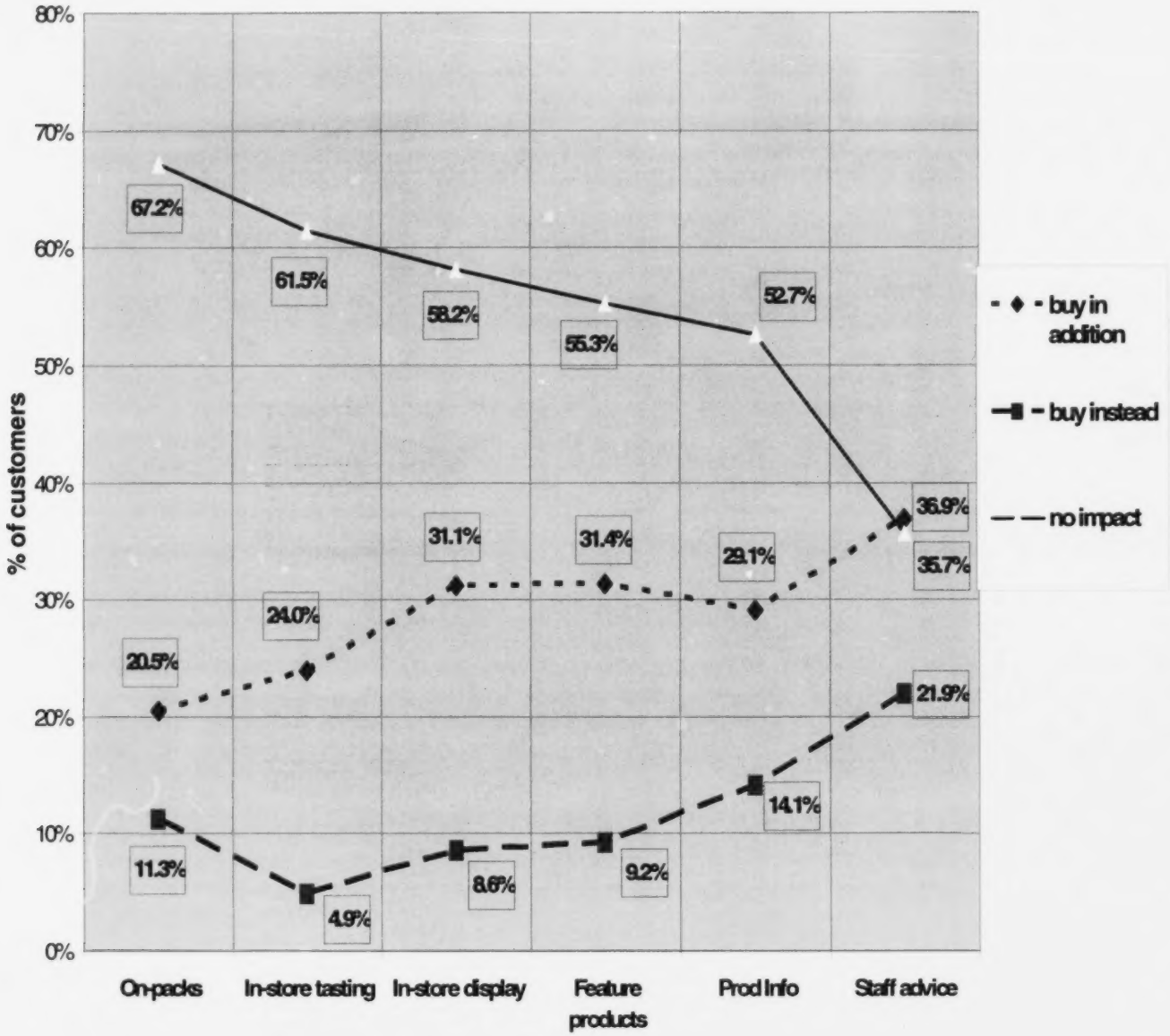
Have person with wine expertise on the floor, tasting opportunities with knowledgeable staff.

In-store promotional activities generally resulted in customers buying the particular product in addition to their regular purchase (as opposed to substituting it), for those customers that changed their purchase decision. Women were more likely than men to want information on products, and to make their purchase decision based on staff advice

Although approximately 60% of customers were not influenced by other in-store activities such as on-packs or tastings, this proportion was reduced significantly (to 36%) when they were provided with advice by store staff. Similarly, advice from store staff resulted in 22% buying the recommended product instead of their regular purchase, and in 37% buying in addition to their regular purchase.

20% of customers were influenced by having tried the liquor products elsewhere before deciding to buy. Other sources of information, such as television advertising, were not important to them.

Impact on Purchase Decisions



1/3 of customers would like to have more information on liquor products. Twice as many women as men would like this kind of information. Customers said they want more information on wines, drink recipes, pairing suggestions for wines and beers, as well as a catalogue of products available to order.

More information on new products coming into the store

Ideas on what goes with what …not just white wine with chicken, but what kind of wine goes with teriyaki chicken

Food pairing suggestions – what goes good with moose

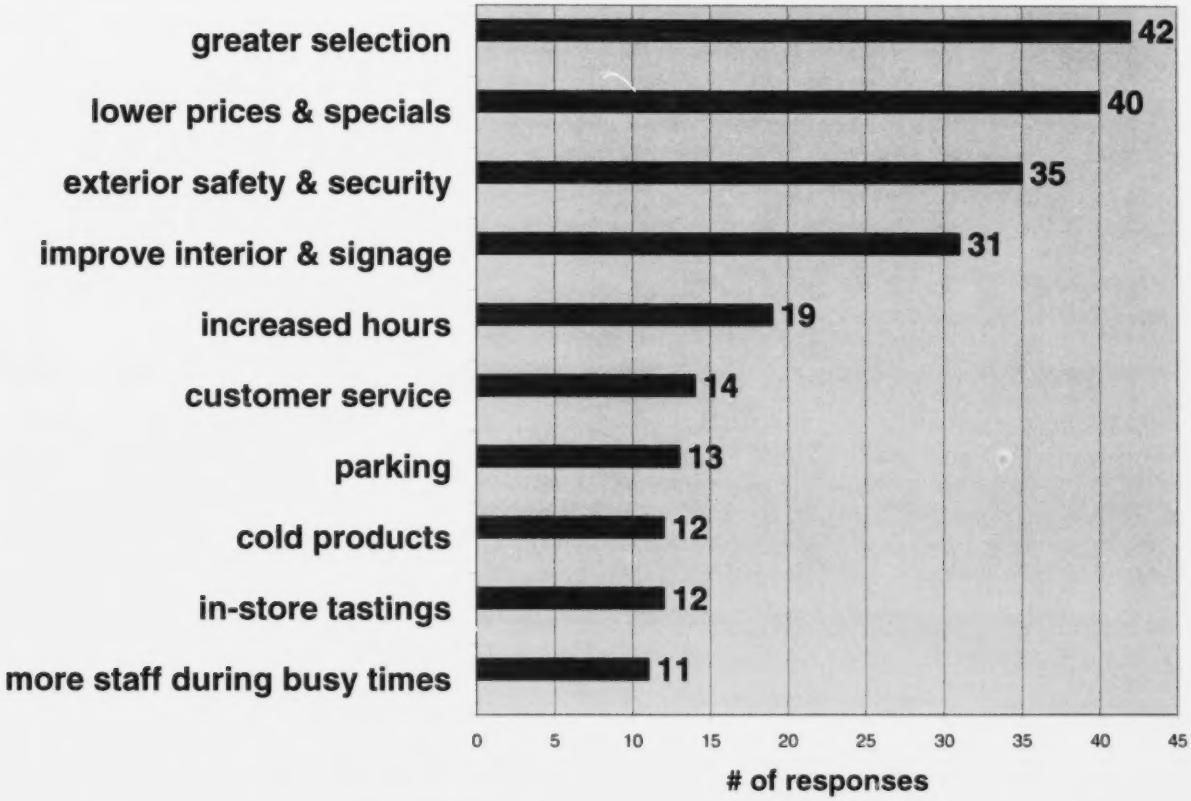
Cocktail recipes

Results: Web-site

Almost 90% of survey participants did not know about our website; only half of those who knew about the website actually visited it.

www.ylc.yk.ca

Results: If there was one thing that would make a big difference to you so that you would enjoying shopping here more, what would it be?



Although a number of people mentioned lower prices on products, other areas were identified by customers as being extremely important to them. Many people want a greater selection of products, particularly wine and beer. Feeling safe outside the store was also seen as a priority by many people, as were interior renovations and other issues noted in the table above.

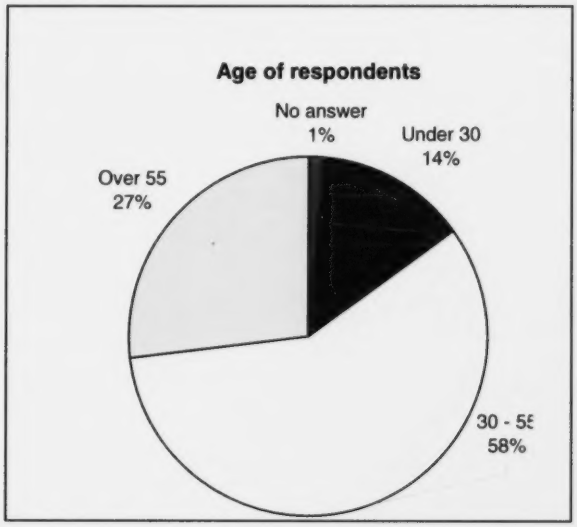
More in-store wine tasting where they feature a different wine once a week.

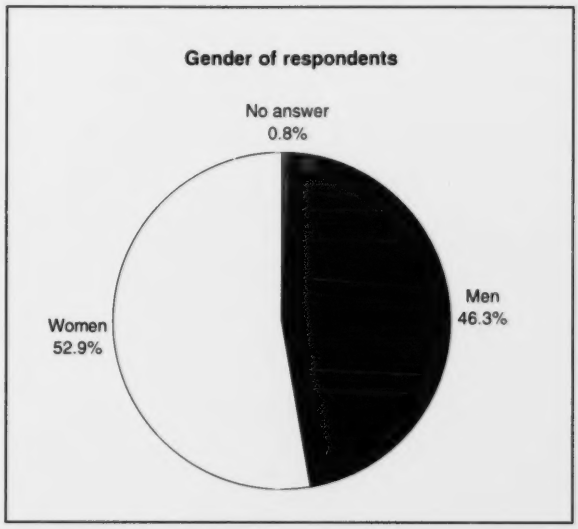
Modernize the store and make the parking lot safer

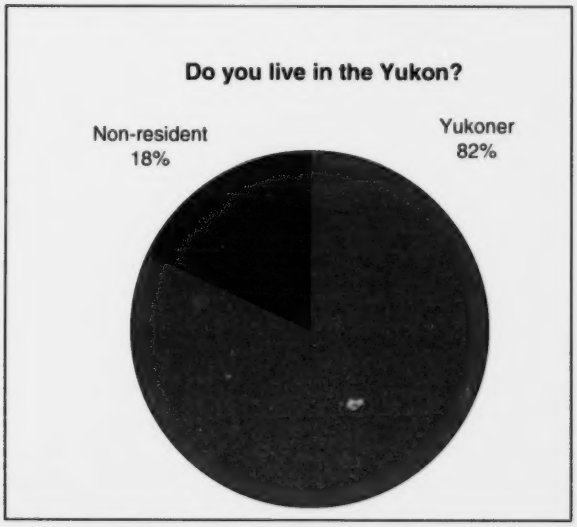
A compassionate approach to handling people outside the store

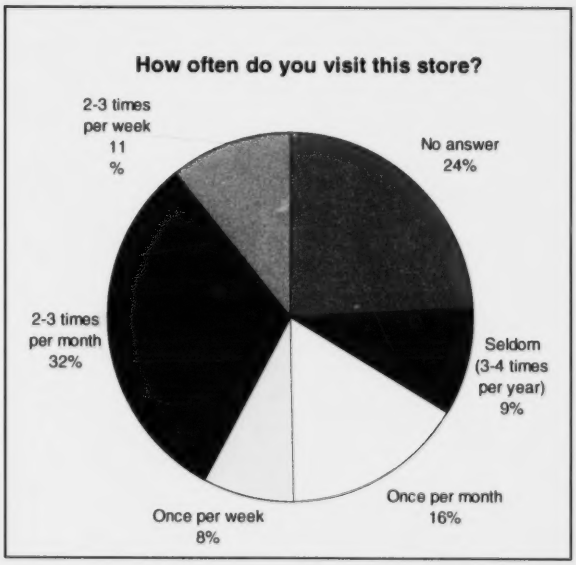
Responses - demographics

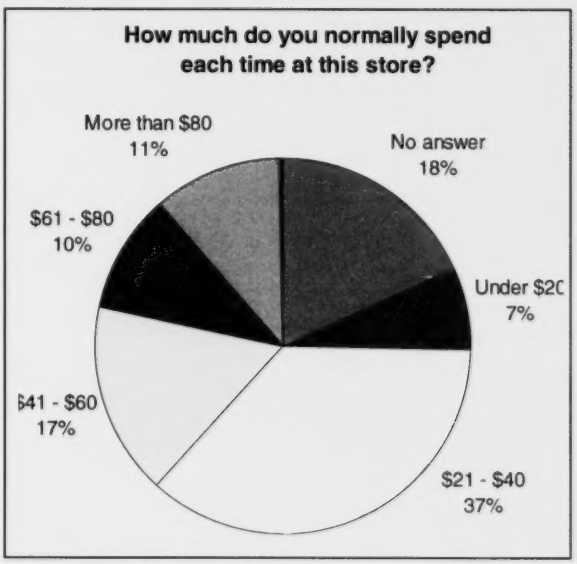
Appendix 1











Product Price

Appendix 2